

Wenholz appointed to county budget committee

Commission discusses ways to get more volunteer applicants

By David Sykes

Jeff Wenholz of Irrigon was reappointed to the county budget committee last week. He was the only applicant for the volunteer three-year position. Wenholz also serves as chair of the county planning commission, a member the county Solid Waste Advisory committee and the Irrigon Multi-Cultural Arts Center Board.

In applying for the position Wenholz said, “My qualifications for serving on the budget committee include majoring in accounting in the Portland State University honors program, sixteen years of approving and reviewing budgets in excess of \$100 million as a director for Umatilla Electric Cooperative and among other responsibilities, serving as accountant/bookkeeper for our family businesses of Irrigon Motors and Irrigon Mini-Storage. I also serve on the audit committee as a director for LS Networks, a Portland based fiber optic service provider.” Wenholz is from Irrigon and has lived in Morrow County for 47 years.

In making the appointment, commissioners discussed how to get more people to apply for budget committee positions. “I know he is on the Umatilla Electric Board of Direc-



Jeff Wenholz

tors,” said commissioner Jim Doherty. “He is the planning commission chair and you like that there are folks willing to take on these challenges,” however Doherty said he thinks the county should do more to get people to apply for county citizen volunteer positions. “I think that we should go out and recruit. I am happy that Jeff is on there and I’m happy to second the motion and happy to vote for him. But you always want some diversity,” Doherty added.

Commissioner Don Russell agreed. “I agree with Commissioner Doherty. We end up with people who have a pretty heavy finance background and accounting background in these budget positions. I think that is great, but I don’t think that it’s necessary. The hard budgeting really is how you spend our scarce resources, your revenue over unlimited requests for ways to spend them. You don’t necessarily need to be in tune with budget law,” he said. “In the future

I encourage people that may not have that high level of accounting background or finance background that Jeff does to apply.”

Russell said there is a lot of common sense in the budgeting process. “You got \$10 to spend and \$500 worth of requests you just need to pare down and do the best you can with the budget. Commissioner Lindsay said people need to get involved with the county government. “People are afraid when you say budget committee. Everybody would like to weigh in on how they would like you to spend the money, but when it comes to the budget they are scared.”

“They feel like they need to be in tune with Oregon budget law, that is not the case. I’ve got a degree in accounting and have been an accountant for a lot of years but I am not an expert on Oregon budget law,” Russell said. “We have great diversity of location but we could definitely get some diversity that represents our community as well,” Lindsay said. The commission voted unanimously to appoint Wenholz.

Picking a retirement fund advisor delayed

In other business at the Sept. 9 meeting, the commission delayed a decision on picking a financial advisor for the county’s

newly defined contribution retirement plan.

The county received proposals from four financial advisor businesses, however, Lindsay asked for the delay in picking because she had not had a chance to view the minutes and notes from the interview process. When the county decided to switch to a defined plan rather than the current guaranteed benefit plan, a committee of five was picked to interview candidates to handle the investment work. That committee which included Administrator Darrell Green, Commissioner Russell, Finance Director Kate Knop, the county payroll director and the county human resource director worked the past two years on finding a suitable financial firm. The qualifications they were looking for were to provide “administration, recordkeeping, education, enrollment and investment management services of the new defined contribution retirement plan.”

The group interviewed four applicants and decided on Kassie Williams of Edward Jones located in Hermiston. Members of the interview team had high praise for Williams. “I have seen it all and it was unanimous among the group that Kassie Williams was our choice,” Russell said

in urging the commission to approve the recommendation. Lindsay however said she would not vote in favor. “I want to see those minutes where the team was picked. I would like to see the presentations before I make the decision. This is a huge decision and I would like to see the presentations. I am not ready to make a decision. If you do, I will not vote,” she told the commission.

The county decided to move from the guaranteed payment system retirement plan where retirees are guaranteed an income regardless of the investment performance, to a program where a certain amount of money will be invested by the county and the employee and the market yield will determine retirement payouts. The defined payment plan was unsustainable and accumulating debt the county would be unable to pay off. Realizing the county would not be able to meet its retirement obligations if a change was not made, Commissioner Russell engineered the switch to defined contribution.

In refusing to vote on the recommended applicant, Lindsay said “I want to see what everyone else got to see because I did not choose the team and I would just like to look at

it. I appreciate all the work; I just want to look at it.” Commissioner Jim Doherty said while he appreciated the work the group put in, he was also against making a decision at the meeting. He refused to second the motion for a vote, and it died for lack of a second. Knop said she would provide all the documentation related to the interviews for Lindsay’s review.

Going out for new admin building funding

In other business the commission voted to ask for proposals from financial organizations for financing of the new \$6.8 million administration building in Irrigon. The commission wanted to make sure local financial institutions in the county were notified of the finance request. “When we financed the Bartholomew Building in Heppner, we asked for proposals for banks in Morrow County,” Russell said. “I suggest we do that again. Don’t exclude any financial institution but make sure we include those that do business in Morrow County,” he emphasized. What the name of the new building would be was also discussed. Several names have apparently been submitted, and the county hopes to have a name ready at the groundbreaking ceremony later this fall.

Morrow County students’ art celebrated



“Super Chicken” was drawn by Kathryn Anderson.

Two Morrow County students in grades four and five were honored during a virtual reception held earlier this week. Their artwork was selected among 643 entries submitted to the AITC Calendar Art Contest, sponsored by Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation (AITC). The AITC Calendar Art Contest showcases Oregon’s diverse agricultural and natural resource commodities. This year, artwork was

submitted by students in kindergarten through sixth grade across the state in public, private, charter and homeschool education systems featuring Oregon agriculture and natural resources. The entries received celebrated Oregon’s diverse agriculture with artwork depicting a wide variety of Oregon’s 220 agricultural commodities.

The two students receiving this honor came from two Morrow County



Sheep grazing in a field was drawn by Isabelle Ogden.

Schools, lone Community School and Heppner Elementary School.

Isabelle Ogden, a fifth grader from lone Community School submitted artwork featuring sheep grazing in an open field with luscious green grass and can be viewed on the March page of the calendar. In describing her artwork, Isabelle said, “I chose to draw sheep because when I did 4-H I had a sheep. Sheep provide food and fi-

ber in the state of Oregon.”

Fourth grade student Kathryn “KC” Anderson from Heppner Elementary

School drew a chicken and can be viewed on the February page of the calendar. In describing her artwork, KC said, “I chose to draw chickens because I like the detail on their feathers and they produce eggs and meat for Oregon.” KC also said, “We have nine free range chickens at my house. Some of the chickens are Golden Laced Wyandotte. I based my drawing off one of these and her name is Super Chicken.”

“The calendar contest is a great project for teachers and students to assign as a fun project during this time of distance learning. It gives teachers an oppor-

tunity to discuss the bounty and beauty of Oregon agriculture and incorporate art into their virtual classrooms,” said Jessica Jansen, AITC Executive Director. Each month in the calendar features one of the winning student’s art and each day of the year has a fact about agriculture.

The thirteen students selected to be featured in our 2020-2021 calendar received a \$50 award and a certificate to commemorate this honor. The winning artwork are displayed on the website. Calendars are free to Oregon teachers, and can be ordered for just \$4 on oregonaitc.org/shop.

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NEW LISTING!

\$159,500

There are two homes on this property. The bigger one is a 3 bedroom 1 bath 958 sq ft now renting for \$800 per month. Smaller home is a 1 bedroom 1 bath 576 sq ft renting for \$400 a month. There are water rights from the creek to water the yard and a shed in the back. Located on a dead end street. Call for an appointment and have a look.

680 W SPERRY ST, HEPPNER

\$139,500

Office building in great condition right on main street in Heppner. Located in the heart of the business district it's ready to move into. Includes front lobby, private office with window to the front. Former bank building with lots of storage. A small kitchenette/break room and a restroom. Alarm system installed. If you are looking for an office or even a small store space this will work for you. Call today for a showing.

127 N Main St Heppner

\$132,000

SOLD!

This three bedroom one bath home located on a quiet street in Heppner is well kept and in good condition. It's very clean with newer carpets and is ready to move into. A full basement with a mini-shop and laundry room is ready for you. The property is fenced for use by your children or pets. Drive into the carport from the backside on Riverside St. for easy access. Call me and we can go take a look!

385 W Union Ave Heppner

\$295,000

SALE PENDING
PRICE REDUCED

One of Heppner's premier homes with so much to offer. Have room for a large family or when friends and relatives gather. 4 bedroom 3 bath with large living room, family room. Lots of storage everywhere. Enjoy a great view of the city from your front window, or enjoy a barbecue on one of two private decks. Lots of parking too with two attached spaces and a carport. All this on a secluded 1.88 acres at the top of town. Call for a showing

725 S CHASE ST Heppner

\$230,000

SALE PENDING

Very nice 2 bedroom, 2 bath home with office that can be another bedroom. Excellent condition with a low maintenance yard, two car attached garage and great view of Willow Creek Lake. A fast-circulating hot water heater pump gives you instant hot water in both baths. Master bath has a Jacuzzi. Refrigerator & range included in the sale. Located in a quiet neighborhood with just a short distance down the hill to put your fishing line in the water. Call me soon for a showing!

430 FRANK GILLIAM DRIVE, HEPPNER

Information deemed correct
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